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AUTHOR:

EURIPIDES

TITLE:

CHORUSES FROM THE
IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

PLACE:

LONDON

DATE:

1919

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC MICROFORM TARGET

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Iphigenia in Aulide.
Eng. Aldington.

Euripides.

... Choruses from the Iphigeneia in Aulis
and the Hippolytus of Euripides. Translated
by H. D. London, The Egoist Ltd., 1919.
37, [1], p. 19cm. (The Poets' translation
series. Second set: no. 3)

D88ER
J13

Copy in Classics. 1919.

B88ER
J1

Copy in Special Collections. 1919.
Errata slip inserted.

Re

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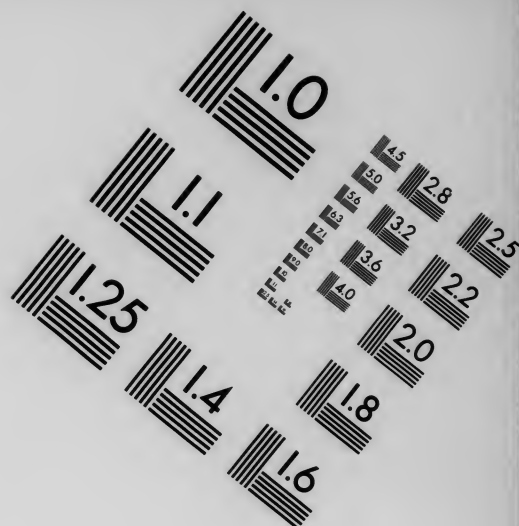
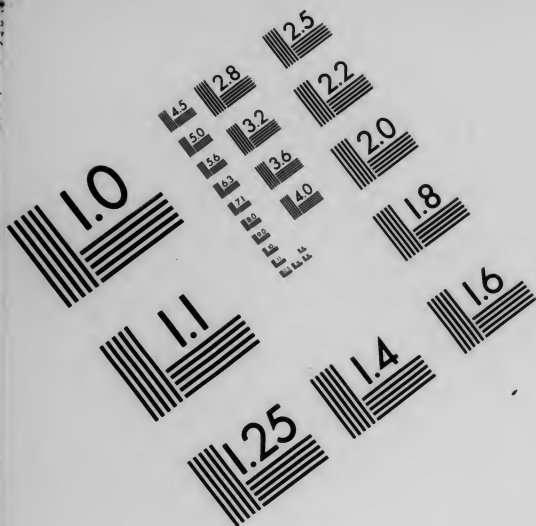


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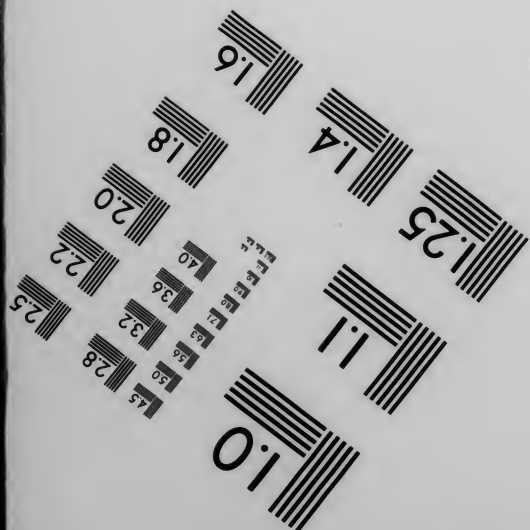
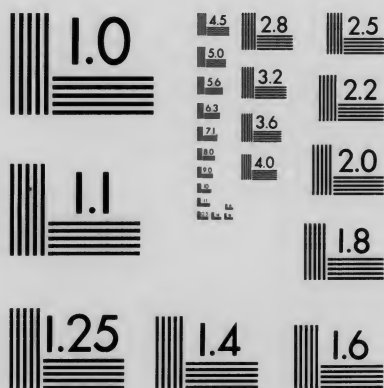
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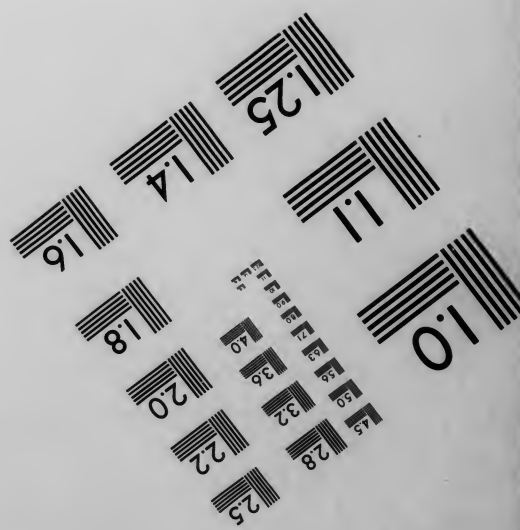
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TRANSLATED BY H. D.



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CHORUSES FROM THE
IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS
OF EURIPIDES

I
CHORUS OF THE WOMEN OF CHALKIS

I
CROSSED sand-hills.
I stand among the sea-drift before Aulis.
I crossed Euripos' strait—
Foam hissed after my boat.

I left Chalkis,
My city and the rock-ledges.
Arethusa twists among the boulders,
Increases—cuts into the surf.

I come to see the battle-line
And the ships rowed here
By these spirits—
The Greeks are but half-man.

Golden Menelaos
And Agamemnon of proud birth
Direct the thousand ships.

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

They have cut pine-trees
For their oars.
They have gathered the ships for one purpose:
Helen shall return.

There are clumps of marsh-reed
And spear-grass about the strait.
Paris the herdsman passed through them
When he took Helen—Aphrodite's gift.

For he had judged the goddess
More beautiful than Hera.
Pallas was no longer radiant
As the three stood
Among the fresh-shallows of the strait.

2

I crept through the woods
Between the altars:
Artemis haunts the place.
Shame, scarlet, fresh-opened—a flower,
Strikes across my face.
And sudden—light upon shields,
Low huts—the armed Greeks,
Circles of horses.

I have longed for this.
I have seen Ajax.

4

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

I have known Protesilaos
And that other Ajax—Salamis' light
They counted ivory-discs.
They moved them—they laughed.
They were seated together
On the sand-ridges.

I have seen Palamed,
Child of Poseidon's child:
Diomed, radiant discobolus:
Divine Merion, a war-god,
Startling to men:
Island Odysseos from the sea-rocks:

And Nireos, most beautiful
Of beautiful Greeks.

3

A flash—
Achilles passed across the beach.
(He is the sea-woman's child
Chiron instructed.)

Achilles had strapped the wind
About his ankles,
He brushed rocks
The waves had flung.
He ran in armour.

5

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

He led the four-yoked chariot
He had challenged to the foot-race.
Emelos steered
And touched each horse with pointed goad.

I saw the horses:
Each beautiful head was clamped with gold.

Silver streaked the centre horses.
They were fastened to the pole.
The outriders swayed to the road-stead.
Colour spread up from ankle and steel-hoof.
Bronze flashed.

And Achilles, set with brass,
Bent forward,
Level with the chariot-rail.

4

If a god should stand here
He could not speak
At the sight of ships
Circled with ships.

This beauty is too much
For any woman.
It is burnt across my eyes.

The line is an ivory-horn.
The Myrmidons in fifty quivering ships
Are stationed on the right.

6

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

These are Achilles' ships.
On the prow of each
A goddess sheds gold:
Sea-spirits are cut in tiers of gold.

5

Next, equal-oared ships
Were steered from the port of Argos
By one of the Mekistians.
Sthenelos was with him.

Then the son of Theseus
Led out sixty ships,
Prow to prow from Attica.
A great spirit keeps them—
Pallas, graved above each ship.

6

Wings bear her
And horses, iron of hoof:
The phantom and chariot
Appear to men slashed with waves.

Fifty Boeotian ships,
Heavy with bright arms,
Floated next:

7

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

The earth-god stood at the prow
With golden-headed serpent.

Leitos, born of earth,
Guided this group of ships.

Ships had gathered
From ports of Phokis:
The Lokrians sent as many.
Ajax left beautiful Thronion
To lead both fleets.

7

From Mykenæ's unhewn rock,
Men, led out by Agamemnon,
Served beyond the breakwater
In one hundred ships.
His brother went with him—
 Lover to lover.

Insult was thrown upon both
Helen, possessed,
Followed a stranger
From the Greek courtyard.
They would avenge this.

Nestor brought ships from Pylos.
They are stamped
With Alpheus' bull-hoof.

8

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

8

There were twelve Ænian sails:
Gouneos led the twelve ships.
He is the tribe-king.
Near him were Elis' petty-chiefs—
The common people call Epians—
And Eurytos, their great chief.

Meges brought white-wood oars
From island Taphos.
He left Echinades—
Sailors find no entrance
Across the narrow rocks.

Ajax of Salamis
Finished the great arc:
He joined both branches
To the far border
With twelve ships,
Strung of flexible planks.

9

I have heard all this.
I have looked too
Upon this people of ships.
You could never count the Greek sails
Nor the flat keels of the foreign boats.

9

B

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

I have heard—
I myself have seen the floating ships
And nothing will ever be the same—
The shouts,
The harrowing voices within the house
I stand apart with an army:
My mind is graven with ships.

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

II

Paris came to Ida.
He grew to slim height
Among the silver-hoofed beasts.
Strange notes made his flute
A Phrygian pipe.
He caught all Olympos
In his bent reeds.
While his great beasts
Cropped the grass,
The goddesses held the contest
Which sent him among the Greeks.

He came before Helen's house.
He stood on the ivory steps.
He looked upon Helen and brought
Desire to the eyes
That looked back—

The Greeks have snatched up their spears.
They have pointed the helms of their ships
Toward the bulwarks of Troy.

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

III

I

The crowd of the Greek force
With stacked arms and with troop-ships
Will come to Simois—
The strait, furrowed deep with silver.

They will enter Troy.
The sun-god built the porticoes.
Kassandra shakes out her hair—
Its gold clasped
With half-opened laurel-shoots—
When the god strikes her
With his breath.

They will stand on Pergamos.
They will crowd about the walls.

They will lift their shields,
Riveted with brass,
As they enter Simois
In their painted ships.

Two brothers of Helen are spirits
And dwell apart in the air,
Yet the shieldsmen will take her,
And men, alert with spear-shaft,
Will carry her to the Greek coast.

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

2

And Pergamos,
City of the Phrygians,
Ancient Troy
Will be given up to its fate.
They will mark the stone-battlements
And the circle of them
With a bright stain.
They will cast out the dead—
A sight for Priam's queen to lament
And her frightened daughters.

And Helen, child of Zeus,
Will cry aloud for the mate
She has left in that Phrygian town.

May no child of mine,
Nor any child of my child
Ever fashion such a tale
As the Phrygians shall murmur,
As they stoop at their distaffs,
Whispering with Lydians,
Splendid with weight of gold—

"Helen has brought this.
They will tarnish our bright hair.
They will take us as captives
For Helen—born of Zeus
When he sought Leda with bird-wing
And touched her with bird-throat—
If men speak truth.

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

"But still we lament our state,
The desert of our wide courts,
Even if there is no truth
In the legends cut on ivory
Nor in the poets
Nor the songs."

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

IV

I

Burnished-head
By burnished-head,
Pierides sought the bride:
They touched the flute-stops
And the lyre-strings for the dance,

They made the syrinx-notes
Shrill through the reed-stalk.
They cut gold sandal-prints
Across Pelion
Toward the gods' feast.

They called Pelios
From steep centaur-paths,
And Thetis
Among forest trees:
They chanted at the feast
Where Phrygian Ganymede,
Loved of Zeus,
Caught the measure of wine
In the circle of the golden cups.

While fifty sea-spirits
Moved and paused
To mark the beat
Of chanted words
Where light flashed
Below them on the sand.

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

2

A centaur-herd,
Wild-horses, crowned with grass,
Swept among the feasting gods
With fir-shoots
Toward the wine-jars.
And Chiron,
Inspired by the rites of song,
Cried with a loud voice:

"From Thessaly,
The great light

Whom Thetis will beget,"
(He spoke his name),
"Will come with the Myrmidons
Spearsmen and hosts with shields,
Golden and metal-wrought,
To scatter fire
Over Priam's beautiful land."

Therefore the spirits blessed
The fair-fathered,
The Nereid,
And chanted at Pelios' feast.

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

3

(To *Iphigeneia*.)

Your hair is scattered light:
The Greeks will bind it with petals.

And like a little beast,
Dappled and without horns,
That scampered on the hill-rocks,
They will leave you
With stained throat—
Though you never cropped hill-grass
To the reed-cry
And the shepherd's note.

Some Greek hero is cheated
And your mother's court
Of its bride.

And we ask this—where truth is,
Of what use is valour and is worth?
For evil has conquered the race,
There is no power but in base men,
Nor any man whom the gods do not hate.

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

V

Iph. It is not for me, the day,
Nor this light of sun.
Ah, mother, mother,
The same terror is cast on us both.

Alas for that Phrygian cleft,
Beaten by snow,
The mountain-hill, Ida,
Where Priam left the young prince,
Brought far from his mother
To perish on the rocks:
Paris who is called,
Idæos, Idæos
In the Phrygian court.

Would that he had never thrived,
Would that he had not kept the flocks.
O that he had not dwelt
At that white place of the water-gods:

In meadows,
Thick with yellow flower-sprays
And flowers, tint of rose,
And the hyacinth we break for gods.

For Pallas came there,
And Kypris, crafty-heart,
And Hera and Hermes, legate of god
(Beautiful Kypris,
Pallas with spear-hilt,
Hera, queen, wed with Zeus.)

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

It was a hated judgment, O slender-girls.
The contest of beautiful-face by beautiful-face
Has brought this:
I am sent to death
To bring honour to the Greeks.

Ch. For Ilium, for Ilium
Artemis exacts sacrifice.

Iph. O wretched, wretched,—
I know you, Helen, sharp to do hurt.
I am slaughtered for your deceit.

O I am miserable:
You cherished me, my mother,
But even you desert me.
I am sent to an empty place.

O that Aulis had not harboured
These beaked ships,
Nor sheltered their brazen prows
As they floated toward Troy:
O that Zeus had not turned them
Nor wafted their splendour
Through the straits:
For Zeus strikes different winds
To each ship,
So that some men laugh
With the light flap of the sails,
Some bend with anger
At their work:

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

Some haul up the sheets,
Some knot the great ropes,
Some dash through the spray
To quick death.

And each man is marked for toil,
Much labour is his fate,
Nor is there any new hurt
That may be added to the race.

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

VI

Iph. Now sing, O slight girls,
Without change of note,
My death-pæon and Artemis' chant.

Stand silent, you Greeks.
The fire kindles.
They step to do sacrifice
With reed-basket of salt-cakes:
I come—I free Hellas.
My father, as priest awaits me
At the right altar-step.

Hail me now.
I destroy Phrygia and all Troy.
Clasp on the flower-circlet.
Wind it through the locks just caught with it.
Bear water in a deep bowl.
Stand around the temple-front
And the altar of heaped earth.
For I come to do sacrifice,
To break the might of the curse,
To honour the queen, if she permit,
The great one, with my death.

Ch. O, mother, high-born,
Of proud birth,
Will you not weep for us?
For we may not cry out
In the splendour of this holy place.

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

Iph. Slight girls, stand forth,
Chant Artemis—Artemis:
She fronts the coast,
She stands opposite Chalkis—
For spears will clash in the contest
My fame has brought
In the shelter of these narrow straits.

Hail, land of my birth.
Hail Mykenæ, where I once dwelt—

Ch. (She calls upon the city of Perseus,
Built of unchiselled rock.)

Iph.—you brought me to the Greek light
And I will not hold you guilty
For my death.

Ch. Your name will never be forgotten,
Your honour will always last.

Iph. Alas, day, you brought light,
You trailed splendour
You showed us god:
I salute you, most precious one,
But I go to a new place,
Another life.

Ch. Alas, she steps forward
To destroy Ilium and the Phrygians
A wreath is about her head,
She takes water in a dish.

CHORUSES FROM IPHIGENEIA IN AULIS

She comes to meet death,
To stain the altar of the goddess,
To hold her girl-throat
Toward the knife-thrust.

The land-springs await
And the sacred bowls,
And the Greek host, eager to depart.
But let us not forget
With our past happiness,
Artemis, daughter of god,
Queen among the great,
But cry out:
Artemis, rejoicer in blood-sacrifice,
Send the force of the Greeks
To Troy and the Phrygian court.

And grant that Agamemnon may clasp
Fame, never to be forgot
Upon his brow—encircled
By Greek spear-shafts,
May he gain honour for all the Greeks.

CHORUSES FROM THE HIPPOLYTUS OF EURIPIDES

I

THERAPONTES.

DAEMON initiate, spirit
of the god-race, Artemis,
Latona's daughter,
child of Zeus,
of all maids loveliest,
we greet you, mistress:
you dwell in your father's house,
the gold-wrought porches of Zeus,
apart in the depth of space.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Of all maids, loveliest,
I greet you, Artemis,
loveliest upon Olympos:
dearest, to you this gift,
flower set by flower and leaf,
broken by uncut grass,
where neither scythe has dipped
nor does the shepherd yet
venture to lead his sheep;

CHORUSES FROM HIPPOLYTUS

there it is white and fragrant,
the wild-bee swirls across; *διέρχεται*
as a slow rivulet,
mystic peace broods and drifts:

Ah! but my own, my dearest,
take for your gold-wrought locks
from my hands these flowers,
as from a spirit.

CHORUSES FROM HIPPOLYTUS

II

CHORUS OF TROIZENIAN WOMEN.

At high-tide,
the sea—they say—
left a deep pool
below the rock-shelf:
in that clear place
where the women dip
their water-jars,
my friend steeped her veils
and spread the scarlet stuff
across the hot ridge
of sun-baked rocks:
she first brought word
of my mistress:

"She lies sick,
faint on her couch
within the palace;
her thin veils
cast a shadow
across her bright locks.
I count three days
since her beautiful lips
touched the fine wheat—
her frail body
disdains nourishment:
she suffers—
some secret hurt
hastens her death."

11 lines (73-83) are translated
Of these 11, three are omitted

CHORUSES FROM HIPPOLYTUS

Surely, O young queen,
you are possessed
by Pan, by Hecate,
by some spirit
of the Corybantic rites,
or by Cybele
from the hill-rocks!
or have you sinned
that you suffer thus,
against Artemis?
Have you offered
no sacrificial cakes
to the huntress?
For she walks above earth,
along the sea-coast,
and across the salt trail
of the sea-drift.

Or is it that your lord,
born of Erechtheus,
the king most noble in descent,
neglects you in the palace
and your bride-couch
for another in secret?
Or has some sea-man,
landing at our port,
friendly to ships,
brought sad news from Crete?
For some great hurt
binds you to your couch,
broken in spirit.

CHORUSES FROM HIPPOLYTUS

III

PHÆDRA.

Lift my head, help me up,
I am bruised, bone and flesh;
chafe my white hands, my servants:
this weight about my forehead?
Ah, my veil—loose it—
spread my hair across my breast.

TROPHOS.

There, do not start,
child, nor toss about;
only calm and high pride
can help your hurt:
fate tries all alike.

PHÆDRA.

Ai, ai! to drink deep
of spring water
from its white source;
ai, ai! for rest—black poplars—
thick grass—sleep.

TROPHOS.

What is this you ask,
wild words, mad speech—
hide your hurt, my heart,
hide your hurt
before these servants.

CHORUSES FROM HIPPOLYTUS

PHÆDRA.

Take me to the mountains!
O for woods, pine tracts,
where hounds athirst for death,
leap on the bright stags!
God, how I would shout to the beasts
with my gold hair torn loose;
I would shake the Thessalian dart,
I would hurl the barbed arrow from my grasp.

TROPHOS.

Why, so distraught,
child, child, why the chase
and this cold water you would ask:
but we may get you that
from deep rills that cut the slopes
before the gate.

PHÆDRA.

Artemis of the salt beach
and of the sea-coast,
mistress of the race-course,
trodden of swift feet,
O for your flat sands
where I might mount
with goad and whip
the horses of Enetas.

CHORUSES FROM HIPPOLYTUS

IV

O Spirit,
spark by spark,
you instil fire
through the sight:
to hearts you attack
you grant rare happiness!
Do not front me with grief,
yourself discord manifest!
For neither lightning-shaft
nor yet stars shot
from a distant place
can equal the love-dart,
sped from your hands,
child of God, Eros.

*thou a swift For, that
flies
Deep in our hearts for
let an edge's spear*

In vain along Alpheos,
in vain (if we defy Eros)
are the Greek altars
bright with blood,
and the Pythian rocks
bright with beasts slain
for Helios:
Aphrodite's child
is man's absolute chief:
he protects love's portal
and love's rite,
or ruthlessly betrays men,
destroying them
in his flight.

CHORUSES FROM HIPPOLYTUS

So at Oechalie,
that girl, chaste—
a wild colt,
mateless, uncaught—
was betrayed by Kupris:
Heracles dragged her,
a bacchante, hell-loosed,
from her palace
to his ship:
there was flame and blood spilt
for the bride-chant,
for rapture, unhappiness.

O Thebes,
high-built and chaste,
O Dirke's river-bank,
you can tell how Kupris strikes:
for with thunder-bolt,
alight at both points,
she slew the mother of Bacchus,
child of Zeus!
Ah evil wedlock! Ah fate!
she incites all to evil,
she flutters over all things,
like a bee in flight.

CHORUSES FROM HIPPOLYTUS

V

O for wings,
swift, a bird,
set of God
among the bird-flocks!
I would dart
from some Adriatic precipice,
across its wave-shallows and crests,
to Eradanus' river-source;
to the place
where his daughters weep,
thrice-hurt for Phæton's sake,
tears of amber and gold which dart
their fire through the purple surface.

I would seek
the song-haunted Hesperides
and the apple-trees
set above the sand drift:
there the god
of the purple marsh
lets no ships pass;
he marks the sky-space
which Atlas keeps—
that holy place
where streams,
fragrant as honey,
pass to the couches spread
in the palace of Zeus:
there the earth-spirit,
source of bliss,
grants the gods happiness.

CHORUSES FROM HIPPOLYTUS

O ship
white-sailed of Crete,
you brought my mistress
from her quiet palace
through breaker and crash of surf
to love-rite of unhappiness!
Though the boat swept
toward great Athens,
though she was made fast
with ship-cable and ship-rope
at Munychia the sea-port,
though her men stood
on the main-land,
(whether unfriended by all alike
or only by the gods of Crete)
it was evil—the auspice.

On this account
my mistress,
most sick at heart,
is stricken of Kupris
with unchaste thought:
helpless and overwrought,
she would fasten
the rope-noose about the beam
above her bride-couch
and tie it to her white throat:
she would placate the dæmon's wrath,
still the love-fever in her breast,
and keep her spirit inviolate.

CHORUSES FROM HIPPOLYTUS

VI

No more, O my spirit,
are we flawless,
we have seen evil undrept:
I myself saw it:
the Greek, the most luminous,
the Athenian, the star-like,
banished through his father's hate
to a country far distant.

O sand dunes and sand-stretches
of the Athenian coast,
O mountain-thickets
where you climbed,
following the wild beasts,
with hounds, delicate of feet,
hunting with the dæmon, Artemis !

No more
will you mount your chariot,
yoked with horses of Enetas,
nor spur forward your steed
toward the stadium at Limnas,
and your chant, ever rapturous,
and the answering lyre-note,
shall cease in the king's house:
far in the forest depth
in the glades where she loves to rest,
Latona's child shall be crownless:
at your flight
the contest of the maidens will cease,
and their love-longing, comfortless.

CHORUSES FROM HIPPOLYTUS

And because of your fate,
I accept bitter hurt,
and weep:
ai, ai poor mother,
your birth-pangs were fruitless:
I am wroth with these spirits:
alas, Karites, never-separate,
why, why have you sent him forth,
the unfortunate, blameless,
from his palace,
from his own gates?

CHORUSES FROM HIPPOLYTUS

VII

Men you strike
and the gods'
dauntless spirits alike,
and Eros helps you, O Kupris,
with wings' swift
interplay of light:
now he flies above earth,
now above sea-crash
and whirl of salt:
he enchants beasts
who dwell in the hills
and shoals in the sea-depth:
he darts gold wings
maddening their spirits:
he charms all born of earth,
(all whom Helios visits,
fiery with light)
and men's hearts:
you alone, Kupris,
creator of all life,
reign absolute.

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